

COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

True tales from the annals of history, archaeology, construction, and restoration of the Casa de Bandini and Cosmopolitan Hotel.

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DISCOVERING THE UNKNOWN:

The Casa de Bandini/Cosmopolitan Hotel

Victor A. Walsh, District Historian

The Casa de Bandini/Cosmopolitan Hotel is a priceless historical resource. Originally completed in 1829, its history spans 175 years. It was the hub of social and political activities in Old Town San Diego during Mexican rule. It served as the headquarters of Commodore Robert F. Stockton during U.S. military occupation in 1846. After the Civil War, it became one of Southern California's most important hotel-stage stops.

Over the many years, in spite of many alterations, the grand old building retains a most distinctive architectural character. There are few historic buildings remaining in the state that rival its scale as representative of a nineteenth-century commercial building that combined Mexican adobe and American wood-framing construction techniques.

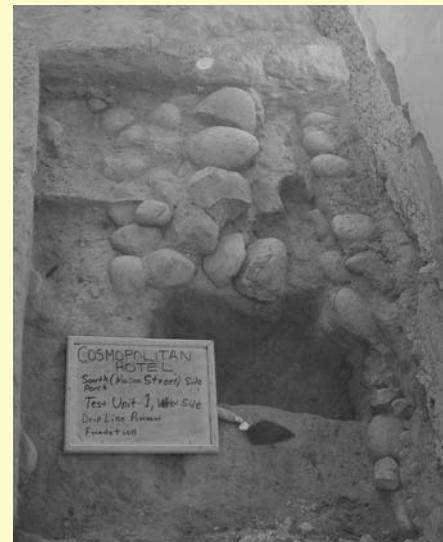
A discovery recently uncovered

pertains to the building's cobblestone foundation on the Calhoun Street side. Directly below a partially exposed door frame between the 2nd and 3rd windows, Steve Van Wormer, an historical archaeologist, has begun to excavate portions of the foundation. Larry Felton, a Senior State Parks Archaeologist, selected this site to examine because the exterior adobe wall on the west side of the door frame is thicker than the wall on the east side. This suggests that the adobe, as originally constructed in 1827-1829, ended here.

The foundations on the west and east sides are noticeably different. The trench on the west side contains fist-size cobbles, four layers deep, while that on the opposite side contains pebbles and almost no cobbles. The foundation on the west side is the original foundation, while that on the east side is obviously more recent, probably dating back to the gold rush in Van Wormer's opinion.

What is interesting and readily apparent is that the original foundation extends out more than a foot and then slopes.

This sloped section served as a splash guard to deflect water dripping off the roof overhand in order to control erosion. This indicates that the original one-story Bandini adobe did not have a veranda on the Calhoun-Street side or most likely on the Mason-Street side.



"What interests me about the building," says Van Wormer, "is its extensive history and how little we really know about its construction. We have the (Mariano Guadalupe) Vallejo drawing (ca 1830s) that shows the number of rooms and their uses, but we have nothing that I know of about the building's construction techniques."

